



House Select Committee on Homeland Security Democrats

JIM TURNER, Ranking Member

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Turner Calls for Watch List Hearings

Citing delays and confusion in the government's effort to develop a comprehensive, integrated watch list, Congressman Jim Turner, Ranking Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, called for immediate hearings to be held on the Terrorist Screening Center and delayed implementation of a unified terrorist watch list.

"In the past month, the deadline for completing this critical project has slipped by nine months, and last week a senior DHS official suggested that a consolidated watch list would not be necessary," said Turner. "After two and a half years of inaction, this is unacceptable."

"The repeated delays and excuses on the issue of terrorist watch list integration by both the FBI and DHS are hard to comprehend. Our Committee should exercise its oversight responsibilities and hold a hearing immediately on this issue of urgent national security importance," said Turner's letter to Chairman Chris Cox.

In November, the Democratic members of the Select Committee issued a report entitled *Keeping Terrorists Out of America by Unifying Terrorist Watch Lists*, detailing how responsibility for developing an integrated watch list shifted four times from September, 2001 to September, 2003. It also established 10 benchmarks by which to measure progress on developing a fully integrated and functional watch list.

In December 2003, the FBI opened the Terrorist Screening Center, acknowledging its "limited capability." The FBI later acknowledged that the project to integrate all watch list information would not be completed until March, 2004.

Recent developments indicate that the development of the list faces further delays:

- February 13, 2004: Secretary Ridge testified before Select Committee on Homeland Security and states that TSC will not be completed until the end of the summer, 2004.
- February 23, 2004: Department of Homeland Security releases 2004 Strategic Plan listing watch list completion as a top priority for 2004, but projects that this will not occur until the end of 2004.
- February 27, 2004: DHS Chief Information Officer Steve Cooper states that "There is not a single, physical consolidated watch list...but we can deliver the equivalent."

"Creating one list of terrorists that can be easily used by the men and women on the

front lines of homeland security is common sense, and should have been done months ago. I cannot comprehend the lack of urgency to complete this national security priority,” said Turner.

TURNER LETTER TO COX ATTACHED

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